

Section 2: Curriculum Review Tools

Purpose

The curriculum review tools are designed to assist sites in reviewing selected aspects of their prevention education curriculum systematically, which can help identify potential areas for refinement.

Steps to Follow

To use these tools you will need to:

1. Select the curriculum you want to assess
2. Decide who and how you want to complete the tools
3. Complete the tools
4. Summarize your findings
5. Plan your next steps

Materials in this Section

- Curriculum Review Form Part A: Lesson-by-Lesson Review (Appendix 2A)
- Curriculum Review Form Part B: Lesson Summary (Appendix 2A)
- Curriculum Review Form Part C: Overall Curriculum Assessment (Appendix 2A)

Step

1 Select the Curriculum

Decide Which Curriculum You Want to Assess

If you use more than one curriculum in your program you may want to take the time to review all of them using this tool, but it may feel overwhelming. To keep your task more focused, it is better to work with one curriculum at a time. Here are some factors to think about to help you decide which curriculum to assess first:

- *Are you using a curriculum that you have used for several years that hasn't been modified or updated recently?* If yes, you may want to assess it first to look for ways to improve the content and/or teaching strategies.
- *Did you take an existing evidence-based curriculum and modify it, or take lessons from several different evidence-based programs?* If yes, you may want to use this tool as a chance to ensure that all the lessons combined still reflect best practices.
- *Are you implementing a new curriculum that was just recently developed or adopted by the program?* If yes, you may be interested in assessing it with this tool to help you make final refinements in the content and teaching strategies.

Summary

After completing this step, you should know which curriculum you will assess first. Ask yourself: *Why did I pick this curriculum first?*

Step

2 Decide Who and How

Decide Who Will be Involved in the Process

These tools are designed to be completed by project staff. Here are some points to consider in deciding who should be involved.

- *Who takes a lead role in developing/modifying the curricula you use at your site?* It is important to include staff members who have a role in shaping the curricula you use at your site, as their involvement could help strengthen future curricula.
- *Who knows your curriculum the best?* Including individuals who know the goals and objectives and curriculum activities could help make the process more informative.
- *Who might be interested in being part of this process?* It is always beneficial to include individuals who have a personal interest in the process.

Decide How You Want to Complete the Tools

Next, you need to think about the best way to approach the task at your site. Here are some ideas to consider.

- You could select a small task group and work together to fill out the tools. (This is ideal.)
- You could select a small task group and divide up the tasks so that each person has different parts to complete. You could then come back together as a team to discuss the findings.
- You could assign one person to fill out the tools and report back to the group on the findings. (This is the most difficult approach.)

Summary

After completing this step, you should be ready to start using the tools. Ask yourself: *Have I left anybody out of the process?*

Step

3 Complete the Tools

Look at your Curriculum Lesson-by-Lesson

The first step in using these tools is to review each lesson in your curriculum using the Part A of the Curriculum Review Form (in Appendix 2A). Here is what you need to do.

- Make one copy of Part A of the Curriculum Review Form for each lesson in your curriculum.
- Fill out the form following the directions at the top of the form.

Note: You may feel that it is not worth taking the time to review each lesson. We encourage you to try it at least once, as it often allows you to see your curriculum in a different way.

- Summarize the information across all the lessons in your curriculum using Part B (in Appendix 2A).

Reflect on Your Curriculum Overall

Next, complete Part C of the Curriculum Review Form (in Appendix 2A). You will need the information from Parts A and B for some of the questions in Part C. Here are the steps:

- Make one copy of Part C. If you are working with a group and each member is taking a smaller number of items, divide up Part C and give each person a few pages.
- Fill out Part C by reviewing the information in the first column, and answering the questions in the second column. If you find areas that need improvement, discuss these and note one or two changes that you could make to enhance your curriculum in the last column on the form. If you do not need to make a change write NA for “not applicable.”

Summary

After completing this step, you should have finished filling out both tools. Ask yourself: *Are all the items complete?*

Step

4 Summarize Your Findings

Review Part B: Lesson Summary

Take time to review Part B of the Curriculum Review Form and think about what the summary data show you. Here are some questions to consider:

- Did the summary data reveal anything that surprised you? If so, what?
- Did the summary data reveal any big holes in your content? If so, what are the holes?
- Did the summary data reveal any areas in which too much time/emphasis is being given? If so, what areas are getting too much coverage?

Review the Last Column on the Part C of the Curriculum Review Form (1 or 2 changes you could make)

At the same time you reflect on Part B, think about the possible changes you listed in the last column on Part C. Here are some questions to consider:

- Which of the changes are most important for you to make? What makes these changes so important?
- Which changes should be made first? What makes you want to make these changes first?
- Which changes will be the most difficult to make? What makes these changes difficult?
- Do you need more information or technical assistance to make any of the changes you identified? If so, what type of information/assistance? Where can you get it?

Summary

After completing this step, you should have a better sense of what types of changes you could make to improve upon your curriculum. Ask yourself: *Will the changes we identified help improve the effectiveness of our curriculum?*

Step

5 Plan Your Next Steps

Decide What Changes You Want to Make

You will probably have several possible changes that could be made to help improve upon your curriculum. Now you need to decide which changes you really want to make. There is no set answer on which ones should be made first, second, etc., but here are some thoughts to consider:

- One way to approach it is to think about which changes will make the most difference to your educators and participants.
- You also can look at the data from other local evaluation tools if you used them (e.g., participant satisfaction data) to see if there are areas for change that are similar across the tools. If so, you could focus on those changes first.

For example, let's say your response to the curriculum assessment form and your participant satisfaction data suggest the need for making your program materials more relevant to your population. You may want to tackle these changes first.

Decide the Best Time of Year to Make the Changes

There are several factors you may want to consider before deciding when to make the changes you identified.

- *How extensive are the changes?* Some changes may be made easily. Others may require more time and planning. If you have identified significant changes you may want to wait until a slower time of year before making them.
- *Do you have a set time of year in which staff members review and update the program materials?* If so, you may want to work these changes into that process.
- *Do you have standard program cycles (e.g., fall and spring)?* If so, you may want to make changes between natural program cycles (e.g., winter or summer).

Decide Who Will Make the Changes

You may already have a system in place for making curriculum refinements, with a person or a team of people in charge of this task. If you do, the changes identified through this tool could be easily included in that process. If you don't, you need to think about who can make the changes and what type of assistance or support that person or team of people might need (e.g., resources, time).

Identify a List of Resources Needed to Make the Changes

Before beginning the process of modifying your curriculum, it might be helpful to have someone make a list of all the resources or information that will be needed to make the changes (e.g., updated facts, more information on risk and protective factors, etc.). This list also should include a column indicating where the information could be obtained (e.g., Internet).

It's possible that your participants will be a good source of input for your planned changes. For example, if you plan to change the role play situations to make them more realistic you could involve several participants and have them help you write new role plays.

Agree Upon a Timeline and Review Process

Before modifying your curriculum, it is ideal to establish a timeline for the changes, and a process for reviewing the revisions. Discuss both of these issues with all individuals involved in the process to clarify expectations and address any potential challenges.

If the changes you plan to make are more extensive, it is helpful to set up several check-in meetings along the way to keep the process on track.

Summary

After completing this step, you should have a plan for making the changes you identified as a result of completing the curriculum assessment tools. Ask yourself: *Have I planned for "who," "what," "when," "how," and "by when" these changes will be made?*